

What the **FH** is that?

By Robert Newman

As a child living in Adelaide we had a fire hydrant in the road out the front of our house and there was a white post about 1 metre high (3 feet in those days) with a red steel cap on the top to indicate that the hydrant was there. I'm sure my father would repaint the post every summer to make sure the firemen could find it when they came to test it every summer.

In Artarmon as with most of suburban NSW a system of markers on the wooden power poles is used to identify the nearest fire hydrants. But what do all those signs mean and how do I find that hydrant that is supposedly in the path outside my house?

'HP' (red) – Hydrant Path (this includes nature strips)

'HR' (red) – Hydrant Road

'H' (green) – secondary indicator plate facing in direction of approach from which primary plates cannot be seen.

You have found the plate, now where is the hydrant?

The 'HP' and 'HR' plates will have some numbers on them. If they don't, then try looking on the opposite side of the pole. The one outside of my unit block has '3' & '100'. The first number is the distance in metres to the hydrant in the direction the plate is facing, the second is the diameter of the water pipe in millimetres.

If you are lucky the hydrant cover will be clearly visible on the road or grass, but sometimes the grass has grown over the cover making lawn mowing easier.

I did this at my parents' place a few years ago and found I was looking at a nicely manicured

section of the nature strip, but no hydrant cover. This is when you may need to get a screw driver and do some test probing to locate the cover and then remove the grass from the top of the cover.

Try to avoid the desire to open the hydrant cover and look inside because if it is on the road you might get run over and it is a nice sheltered area for insects and spiders.

You may also find 'SWS' indicator plates around the place, these indicate Static Water Supply (swimming pool, tanks, dams, ponds or creeks) and can be obtained from the NSW Fire Brigade or Rural Fire Service to alert the fire services to other water sources in the area.

It is a crime to deliberately cover up a fire hydrant or remove a mark that indicates a fire hydrant is there. ■